ous? Which is an even harder question. Well, for one thing they must look prosperous, it being part of the trade. As to the keeping alive proposition, those little places half a block from Broadway where for three cents one may get a big tumbler of cool buttermilk, which is filling, and for another cent a wheat bun, which is even more filling, help to solve the riddle. And so also does the hall bed room, on West 49th-st., say, with the gasjet to which the surreptitious chafing dish may be attached.

After engagements are made the Great Problem simplifies itself somewhat; for from the time he hires his people, the smaller manager, and often the big manager, begins issuing advance orders on salary, and the keepers of the theatrical boarding houses and hotels accept them in lieu of the ready cash. There is a big business done in these advance orders through August and September. The long, hard pull comes before that season of paper bounty is ushered in.

A Shakespearean Heavy Had Just Enough Money to Pay His Fare.

A Shakespearean heavy—who, after a season of bad business, of day coaches by night and long jumps by day, of dismal waits on the wind swept platforms of way stations for trains that should have come at three-forty-five A. M. but didn't do it and never had—had just enough money to pay his fare to town. He quartered himself in one of those weird combination hotel and boarding houses just off Broadway, where few except actor folk go. There was a matter of a two weeks' arrearage for board. Naturally there could be no handing out of tips to the bedraggled help. So when Mr. St. Clair rang the push button in his room thrice for a bell boy, and then thrice times thrice, there was not the slightest response. He stepped out into the hall, holding the lapels of his coat about his uncollared throat with one hand.

"Bell boy! What ho! Bell boy!" rang his full, sonorous tones down the stair well to the cuddy hole of an office two flights below.

"W'atcher want?" floated upward in the voice of youthful disdain.

"I require me laundry, and that at once, sirrah!" said the actor.

"G'wan!" shouted back the insolent bell hop. "You didn't have but one shirt when you come here."

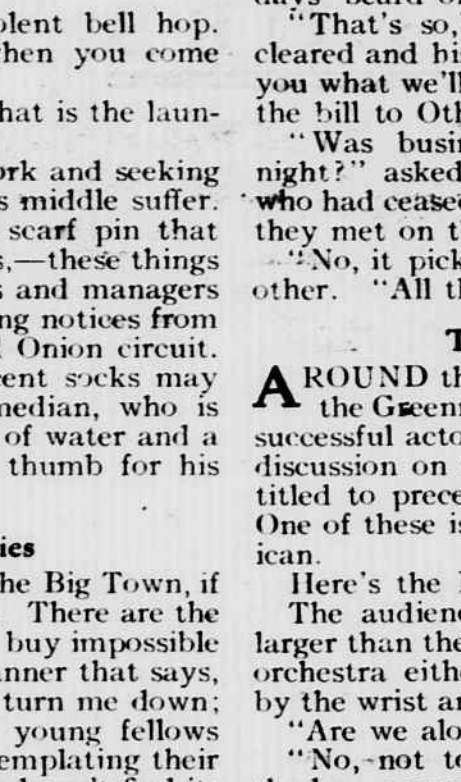
"That," he said with dignity,—"that is the laundry to which I refer."

For, mind you, the actor out of work and seeking it must keep up his front, though his middle suffer. A scraped jowl, spotless linen, and a scarf pin that attests the ingenuity of the Brazilians,—these things go further with some booking agents and managers than a large scrapbook full of flattering notices from the leading semiweeklies on the Red Onion circuit. That fresh shave and those efflorescent socks may mean that the ten-twenty-thirt comedian, who is hunting an engagement, had a drink of water and a taste of the lather on the barber's thumb for his breakfast.

But There Are Tragedies

THERE are plenty of tragedies in the Big Town, if you're of a mind to look for them. There are the shabby old failures who invite you to buy impossible volumes of impossible lore with a manner that says, "I know in advance you're going to turn me down; only please don't!" There are the young fellows who sit all day on park benches contemplating their idle hands that ache for work to do and can't find it; there are the scholarly looking old derelicts who drag their tottery legs up and down Nassau-st. with hopelessness in their faces and their old bodies strapped and padlocked into flaunting advertisements of quick lunches and fountain pens and Swiss clocks.

But I know of no greater tragedy of the city than that of the girl graduate of the dramatic school, who sits all day, day after day, in the outer room of the booking agency, while her enthusiasm seeps away an inch at a time, waiting for five o'clock to come so a nasty little swine of an office boy can tell her "nothin' doin', miss; but you might come back to-morrer."; or that of the old time actor, down and out and getting downer and outer every year, still talking big of what K. & E. are going to do for him, as soon as they find the right play to star him in, but hiring himself to the man that furnishes "extra people" for big productions at fifty cents a night; or that of the chipper repertoire comedian who can sing a little, dance a little, and act a little, but can't buck against the moving picture machines, worse luck! smoothing his striped flannel waistcoat over a sinking heart and a half empty stomach, yet smiling blithely as he stops in front of Brown's to say that everything is coming on fine and dandy, while behind the scenes of his pitiable bluff his mind is wandering to the blistering little furnished room flat up town where the wife and kids are waiting for the news he cannot bring them.



The Graduate of the Dramatic School.

Maybe the actor is vain and self centered, as his critics have stated from time to time; but he is almost invariably generous when he has money, and he certainly is game when he hasn't. Did you ever hear of an actor, big or little, who refused to take part in any of those testimonials and benefits that are forever being given in New York? Last year an actor who had volunteered to do a singing turn at a performance for some charity or other fainted on the stage—from sheer weakness, they said. Being broke, he had gone without sufficient food to get up a special costume for the charity show.

Where the Comedy Comes in

THE real comedy of the actor's life, generally speaking, has to do with his life on the road, though he doesn't always see the comedy himself.

A Western manager now in town told this yarn: The leading man of a little company that was fighting its way through the Rockies, reviving Shakespeare at gaps in the snowsheds and places where the engine stopped for water, approached the manager at a flag station in Colorado. "What's the bill for to-night?" he asked.

"Romeo and Juliet," said the manager.

"Me for Romeo, I suppose?"

"Sure."

"All right then; gimme fifteen cents."

"I never seen such a bunch for wanting money!" complained the manager. "Not a day passes that somebody don't come around wanting money. It's only two days ago I give you fifty cents. I ain't made out of money. What d'ye want them fifteen cents for?"

"For a shave, that's what for!" said the lead somewhat bitterly. "I can't play Romeo with a two days' beard on my face."

"That's so," said the manager. Then his face cleared and his hand left his trousers pocket. "Tell you what we'll do," he said brightly. "We'll change the bill to Othello."

"Was business bad with your show the last night?" asked one struggling manager of another, who had ceased, for the time being, to struggle, when they met on the train coming in.

"No, it picked up fully fifty per cent.," said the other. "All the ushers brought their wives."

Two Hard Luck Stories

AROUND the Albany, or at the Lambs, the Friars, the Greenroom Club, or any other place where the successful actors sit in summer, there is at present a discussion on as to which one of two stories is entitled to precedence in the list of hard luck yarns. One of these is of English origin, the other is American.

Here's the English entry:

The audience in a certain theater wasn't much larger than the orchestra—and it wasn't such a large orchestra either. The villain grasped the heroine by the wrist and dragged her down stage.

"Are we alone?" he hissed in her ear.

"No, not to-night, guv'nor," came the voice of the lone occupant of the top gallery; "but you will be to-morrow night."

Here's the American classic:

In Middle Arkansas the crowning catastrophe descended on the little group that had been carrying "Lady Audley's Secret" into those farther wilds. The hotel man levied on the trunks, and the transfer man tied up the scenery. Then came the silvery gleam in the clouds that lowered.

Twenty miles away, at Polkville, a new opera house had just been finished. The Swiss Bell Ringers were billed to open it; but one of them fell ill at Memphis, and the other had to stay over and nurse him. The house had been sold out for the opening. Word was received that if the bearers of Lady Audley's dread secret could negotiate the passage over from Dycusberg, where they had been tied up, an audience composed of the wealth, the elite, and the beauty of Polkville would await them, also some real money. Could they come? Yea, joyfully could they come! The hotel man and the transfer man would come too, to collect their claims.

A train carried them to the junction. There the hired hacks of Polkville met them. The heavy rode on the seat of the front hack with the driver. It was late afternoon of a lovely day,—a day of promise and cheer. At the roadside the happy negro and the care free boll weevil frolicked amid the growing cotton. A splendid glow lit the western sky.

"Beautiful sunsets you have in this section of the country," said the heavy to the silent driver beside him.

"That there ain't no sunset," said the driver. "That's the new op'ry house burnin' down."

The Two Strongest Press Notices

UNDER the head of press notices, there are two, standing out alone in succinctness and strength, that are being quoted this summer where actors get together. One is credited to an Indiana humorist who simply said, "Uncle Tom's Cabin played at the town hall last night; the dogs were badly supported." And then there was the editor in Iowa who opened his forms to insert a notice reading something like this:

"Mr. Walkover Mapps, the eminent tragedian, and his company appeared at the theater last night. The bill was Hamlet, or the Melancholy Dane. An audience of our best people was present. There has long been a dispute whether Shakespeare or Bacon wrote this justly noted play. We know a way to settle the mooted question for all time. Let the graves of those two noted writers be opened. The one that turned over during last night's performance was the author."

Which, as nobody can deny, should have been sufficient to detain Mr. Mapps, the eminent tragedian, for a period of time commensurate with the exigencies.

When the Stir Begins

ALONG toward the middle of August a more restless spirit begins to pervade the army encamped along the Broadway battlements. Those who have been booked are getting noticeably busy, and those who haven't are getting noticeably uneasy. Voice trials are on, choruses are drilling, rehearsals are starting. Managers are paying fancy prices for the use of halls and stages of closed theaters, and even for lofts over business houses where a troupe or a chorus may practise the lines and the steps.

Burlesque teams, commonly speaking, do not rehearse thus formally. A pair of knockabouts will get together at a café or a quiet corner, or in the privacy of their bed room, and work up new business. Their act, like history, must be made before it can be written, and very often, like real history, it is made without ever being written at all.

Creak & Wheeze at Work

WHILE they loafed, Creak & Wheeze, the well known comedy song and dance team of that name, have been keeping their eyes and their ears open. Creak, the literary member of the firm, has diligently read the funny columns of the daily papers and listened for laughs on the roof gardens. He has also contracted for a brand new song to finish the turn with, entitled "Walking Down the Board Walk with Dr. Mary Walker." Wheeze, who carries the bulk of the physical repartee in the act, has struck on the idea of bringing on a dog done up in a shawl strap, and has thought out a device for squirting seltzer water out of his ear. So the outlook is pretty good; but there must be some new lines to brighten up with. So they both go down to Coney and find a secluded place along the beach, and sit down on the sand where nobody can overhear them and steal their stuff, and they start in.

"We'll do her like this," says Creak. "You'll ask me where I was yistiddy; and I'll say, 'I was to a fire sale yistiddy'; and you'll say, 'What did you git to the fire sale yistiddy?' and I'll say, 'I got my hair singed and a copy of "Barriers Burned Away."' See?"

"Sure, I see," says Wheeze. "'Barriers Burned Away'; fire sale. That'd be good for a laugh at an undertakers' convention. And then w'at?"

"Well, let's see," says the ingenious Creak, with the pride of authorship all alight on his rugged features. "Oh yes, I got it. Then you say, 'Did you git that there soot you got on at the fire sale too?' And I'll say, 'No; this here soot was knocked down to me'; and you'll say, 'How do you know that soot was knocked down?' And I'll say, 'I heard it when it fell,—it's a crash soot!' See?"

"Fine stuff!" cries the honest Wheeze enthusiastically. "That'll go great! All new stuff that ain't none of it been used for years! And just when you say 'Crash!' it'll be a good place for you to gimme a kick, and I'll do that face-fall of mine."

"That's the notion," says the senior collaborator, "and I'll grab you by the seat of your pants and pull you up, and you'll make a noise like a hinge, and then you'll start off, and I'll say, 'Stick around, Kid. We're goin' to open something.' And you'll stop and say, 'W'at you goin' to open?' and I'll say, 'We're goin' to open a window'; and then we'll both come down, and that'll be the cue for the parody stuff. Wheeze, it'll be a sure-fire knockout, and nothin' to it."

But up along the skirts of Broadway, at New Amsterdam Hall and Lyric Hall and at all the other halls, Jack Harkness the gallant fire laddie is looking off stage and saying, "Eleven o'clock and all New York sleeps!" and the hero in his shirt sleeves is pressing the heroine to his manly chest and telling her that, be the cost what it may, he will follow her to the end of the earth.

So then they go over and open in Brooklyn.